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A CALM REVIEW  
OF  
THE INAUGURAL ADDRESS  
OF  
PROF. CHARLES A. BRIGGS.  
BY  
EDWARD D. MORRIS.

*Reprove a man that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.*—HEBREW PROVERB.

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TO THE  
PRESBYTERIAN MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION  
OF CINCINNATI

*this Paper, prepared by their appointment, approved when read before them, and printed at their generous request, is hereby, with thanks for many marks of their love and confidence,*

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

*in the hope that it may prove acceptable to other minds, and in some small degree may help to guide our beloved Church along that mediate course between blind conservatism and an inconsiderate radicalism in which its peace, its strength, and its prosperity must ever lie.*

THE AUTHOR.



## THE INAUGURAL ADDRESS. A CALM REVIEW OF ITS POSITIONS.

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No address delivered of late years on the platform of any among our Theological Seminaries has attracted so much attention or excited such varied comment as the one whose consideration is now proposed. This interest is due in part to the special prominence of the Institution where the address was delivered, and to the nature and purpose of the new Professorship at the time endowed and established, and in part also to the high standing of the speaker as one of the foremost scholars on the continent in particular lines of study and instruction. What was said in the address on certain doctrinal questions of great importance, and especially on some matters which are just now exciting controversy among us, doubtless tended to increase this interest. There are also some elements in the existing condition of Protestant thought generally, in the apparently transitional character of the period, in the popular disaffection toward old methods and opinions, in the extensive desire for what is novel and even revolutionary in the domain of theology, which have contributed still further to such interest. And these exceptional features of the case—easily recognized by all—will furnish, it is believed, whatever justification is needful for a sincere, faithful, earnest examination of this remarkable address, as it is now in an authoritative form published for general inspection.

It is not the object of this review to animadver in any way upon the distinguished speaker, to whom the writer has long been bound by strong ties of friendship. Nor has he anything to say respecting any ecclesiastical issues present or prospective that may spring from the positions taken in the address,—unless it be to avow his frank opinion that the best way to deal with any error that may be discovered there lies, not in judicial procedures, but in such fair and thorough discussion as shall expose such error and bring the whole truth in the case more simply and more fully to the intelligence and conviction of the Church.\* Nor is the writer disposed to criticise unfavorably the general quality and temper of this address, beyond the honest acknowledgment of his regret that, amid so much that is interesting in thought and brilliant in diction, there should be anything that savors of presumptuous confidence in what is expressed, or of contemptuous reference to the beliefs and teachings of other minds deservedly recognized as worthy of the highest respect. Blemishes of this class in such a production have at least the bad effect of predisposing those who note them, to look with suspicion or with prejudice on what they might otherwise have been inclined to regard with favor.

Particular praise of the address is hardly needful here ;

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\* What the writer has seen and known of ecclesiastical procedures for the arresting and correction of current errors of this class, has compelled him to regard them with considerable misgiving, and to prefer greatly what seems to him a more effective way, the way of fair, free, thorough discussion. Respecting the value and the outcome of such discussion, he has almost unbounded faith. In its presence no real error is likely to maintain for long a firm footing in our Church ; and, on the other hand, any error that cannot be overmatched in discussion, will be likely to live and exert its baleful influence in the Church, even though it were condemned by the strongest ecclesiastical verdicts.

it speaks for itself, and in a manner that cannot fail to command extensive interest. Many of its suggestions are deserving of large respect; many of its sentences sparkle with genius; the glow of a high enthusiasm, like the passion for battle, mantles most of its pages. Though not always free from rhetorical faults, it exhibits in general marked skill in style and diction; it shows extensive, though not always well-digested learning; it manifests theological acumen and vigor, though sometimes betraying a lack of discrimination and of depth; it everywhere reveals admirable ardor and earnestness, even in some instances at the sacrifice of discretion. It introduces the reader to a wide and interesting, though somewhat multifarious collection of material, but fails in some degree to organize such material into full unity and compactness; it is too much a congeries or compilation—too little a single, well-developed, vital whole. All in all, however, it will not only take its place fitly among the brightest productions from the fertile pen of its author, but also rank high in the general list of inaugural discourses of this class.

The general aim of the address is sufficiently indicated by the occasion of its delivery,—the instituting of a new Professorship, hitherto unknown in this distinct form in our Church, for the introduction and development of a new science or discipline into our theological cultus, the science or discipline of *Biblical Theology*. The speaker is seeking to set forth this special form of instruction at its full value: to describe this young science in its nature and field, to give some account of its aspirations and methods and contents, and, in general, to commend it to the respect of all who are interested in theology, and particularly of those who are specially concerned with the training of young men in our theological institutions. *How far has he succeeded in this purpose?*

## SOURCES OF AUTHORITY IN RELIGION.

It may be said in all frankness at the outset that it is doubtful whether this purpose was much subserved by the preliminary discussion respecting the Bible, the Church, and the Reason, regarded as three sources of divine authority as to religious doctrine and duty. While the author nowhere represents these as co-ordinate sources, and distinctly recognizes the Bible as the superior source, yet his language seems both to separate the three sources too widely, as if they could be independent of each other, and also to place them practically too nearly on the same level as to authoritativeness. In fact, there are very few who find God—to use his descriptive phrase—through the Bible without the adjunctive influence and teaching of the Church; and fewer still, at least among Protestants, who find God through the Church, without the illuminating aid of the Bible. As for those who, openly rejecting the assistance of both the Bible and the Church, are said to find God through the Reason alone, on what warrant can Professor Briggs maintain that they have any title to a place in the company of the faithful? If James Martineau, who could see, as is here alleged, no proper authority for his religious belief in the Church and the Bible, but in his own reason alone, were to be so classed,\* is it not a very sweeping and

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\* It is a familiar aphorism of Coleridge: *I believe that many Unitarians are Christians, but am sure that Unitarianism is not Christianity.* While we exercise the broadest charity in our judgments of men who seem to us to be departing from the essence of the faith once delivered to the saints, we are bound to see to it that our charitable disposition shall not lead us into any compromise of the faith itself. The following sentence, which the Professor must have overlooked in a recent work of Martineau quoted in his address, will illustrate in a way truly painful the peril of assigning to any man of rationalizing opinions and tendencies a place in the company of the faithful—the

dangerous inference from one such case to conclude or even imply that rationalists in general may be counted in that *multitudo fidelium* who, according to St. Hugo, constitute the true Church of Christ in the world? Is it true, as is alleged, that the average opinion of the Christian world would not assign to Charles Spurgeon a higher place in the kingdom of God than Martineau? Why should such men be included in a class to which they have no desire to belong, and whose companionship they would openly spurn, and from which not only our own Confession (chap. i. 1; x. 4; xvi. 7), but also the universal judgment of evangelical Protestantism, excludes them? How can an intimation of this sort be justified, unless it be on the assumption that in these cases the Reason really becomes an authority superior to the Church and the Scripture, and is of itself sufficient to lead the soul to God and to everlasting life?

When it is remembered that the speaker is not referring here to devout heathen who may haply find God without the help of His written Word, but to known rationalists, who profess to have received that Word and to have set it aside as in no sense an authority in belief, does it not become clear to us that the catholic Professor has not weighed well the possible error and mischief apparent, on close inspection, in his genial but unguarded utterances? And is there not implied in his plea for the rationalism which re-

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invisible Body of Christ: "The blight of birth-sin, with its involuntary perdition; the scheme of expiatory redemption, with its vicarious salvation; the incarnation, with its low postulates of God and man, and its unworkable doctrine of two natures and one person; the official transmission of grace through material elements in the keeping of a consecrated corporation; the second coming of Christ to summon the dead and part the sheep from the goats at the general judgment—all are the growth of a mythical literature, or Messianic dream, or Pharisaic theology, or sacramental superstition, or popular apotheosis."—*Seal of Authority in Religion*, p. 650.

jects the Bible an unwarranted reflection upon the position which Protestantism has with entire unanimity maintained as to such rationalism from the days of the Reformation until now? An intelligent Protestantism does not decry the human reason when in the exercise of its proper functions, within its own proper sphere; nor does it question the worth of the creeds and theologies of the Church as invaluable helps in the attainment and the culture of personal faith in God. But an intelligent and devout Protestantism places neither of these sources of authority by the side of the Bible, as though either were in itself a sufficient or a final source of belief. The Truth of God as contained in the inspired Scripture, believed in and affirmed by the Church, justified and embraced through the reason and the conscience, is held by all evangelical minds to be the only legitimate basis either of acceptable faith or of the right of any man to a place in the blessed company of the faithful; and all liberality which goes very far beyond these boundaries must be viewed as both unwarrantable and dangerous.

#### BARRIERS TO BIBLICAL THEOLOGY.

If a mistake has been made at this point in the address, another of greater importance appears in the account which it gives by way of further preliminary respecting certain barriers which are said to have been raised by men, chiefly by theologians, against the Bible itself as a source of authority in belief. The first of these barriers is styled *Bibliolatry*, which is defined as the worshipping of the Bible as a book, as though there were some magical virtue in it as such. If there is any foundation whatever for such a charge, the accusation seems in this case to trip too lightly from careless lips: it is utterly unsustained by fact in the very exaggerated form in which it is here presented. Bibliolatry is not a sin current among Protestants: and the

characterization of the profound reverence with which they habitually regard and treat the Holy Word, by such a term, is at the best very questionable.—Respecting the three barriers which are next named, barriers springing up from false views and teachings as to the authenticity, the inspiration, and the inerrancy of the Sacred Scriptures, it is needful to speak at greater length.

#### AUTHENTICITY.

Reversing somewhat the order in which these barriers are presented in the address, and speaking first of *Authenticity*, I desire at the outset to express my personal belief in the validity and worth of the new science or process which bears, rather unfortunately, the name of the Higher Criticism. Beyond the relatively limited sphere of what is known as textual criticism, or the exegesis of this or that particular verse or passage, there is, beyond all question, a true and an important sphere for the larger scientific process to which this name has been applied. In other words, there is room and occasion, especially just at the present stage of exegetical investigation, for broader and more thorough inquiry respecting the style, structure, date, authorship, scope, aim, and relations historical and doctrinal, of the particular books or of certain groups of books to each other and to the entire Scripture. Much work of this sort had been done by biblical scholars long before the new science had come into existence as a separate branch of study; but no one who is familiar with the present state and needs of specific exegesis can fail to see that a much larger work along these lines remains to be accomplished.\*

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\* I should be sorry to say a word that might seem to imply any lack of sympathy with this class of higher critics while they are engaged in this important service for Christ and His Church. Contemplating their labors only from the outside, and in no sense as an expert, I am

But I have been obliged, especially of late, to draw a sharp line of distinction between a Higher Criticism which is conservative, reverent, evangelical—which approaches the Bible and deals with it as if it were a veritable Book of God—which searches and investigates that Book only that it may present the one sublime Revelation in more luminous and more glorious lights: and a Higher Criticism which treats the sacred volume on materialistic principles as if it were the compilation of a national literature merely, which occupies itself with negations chiefly, is largely busied with the discovery of discrepancies and defects, and is apparently happiest when it has said something that specially shocks our reverential feeling toward the Book of books. That critics of the first class will grow more careful, more circumspect, as they advance in the prosecution of their delicate task, and more conscious of the peculiar perils as well as the possible benefits of their favorite study, may be confidently expected; and as confidently may we expect to find a clearer and loftier light shining ultimately upon the divine Word as the result of their investigations. On the other hand, it is greatly to be feared that critics of the second class, not sufficiently held back by the sweet constraints of an evangelical piety, may in this country, like their allies in England and Germany, proceed to the point where their labors become destructive rather than constructive, and tend rather to a subtle unbelief than to the nurture and strengthening of an evangelical faith.

It is a truism to say that this new science, like every other science, must submit itself to the old and universal

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bound to confess my great interest in what they are doing, and my faith both in them and in the issues of their labors. So long as supreme loyalty to *The Book* animates them, God will not suffer them to go far astray.

test: *What is it doing?* The address answers this question in part by assuring us that Higher Criticism has shown "that Moses did not write the Pentateuch or Job; that Ezra did not write the Chronicles, Ezra, or Nehemiah; that Jeremiah did not write the Kings or Lamentations; that David did not write the Psalter, but only a few of the Psalms; that Solomon did not write the Song of Songs or Ecclesiastes, and only a portion of the Proverbs; and that Isaiah did not write half of the book that bears his name." Dr. Briggs further tells us that Higher Criticism has ascertained that the great mass of the Old Testament was composed by authors whose names and historic connection with their writings have passed into utter oblivion; that the whole is a combination of miscellaneous fragments to an extent never suspected before the higher critics were born; that the matter of dates, occasions, conditions as well as authorship, is involved in inextricable confusion; that editors and redactors and chroniclers, Elohists and Jehovahists and Deuteronomists and Deutero-prophets, whose names and personalities we know nothing about, have had as much to do as the original authors with the books as we now have them; and so on.\* How all this has been found out, it is not easy for the ordinary mind to discover; but we certainly have a right to ask, in all soberness, whether this whole process has been truly scientific? Have the critics historical data sufficient in quantity and clearness, adequate grounds and premises and materials, upon which to base such a vast fabric of revolutionary conclusions? Are we sure that nothing of all this is traceable to the fertile feeling, to the literary sense or instinct, to the pectoral consciousness and moral disposition of the critics themselves,

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\* See *Biblical Study and Whither*; also, Art. in *Mag. of Christ. Lit.*, Dec., 1889; and a recent Address reported in *Christian Union*.

rather than to any justifying causes and reasons of an external sort? Is this real science, or only a speculating fancy, an exuberant guessing faculty, disporting itself in the sedate robes of the true scientist? \*

A real science always advances beyond the sphere of mere negations; and Higher Criticism, if it would prove itself to be such, must follow the universal law, and show itself to be something more than a studied effort to prove that nothing in the Old Testament is as we have supposed it to be. A real science always leads the mind on from doubt to certainty; but in this instance are we not led away from what we fondly supposed to be certainties into a vast, variable, shifting area of guesses, hypotheses, conjectures, from which we emerge to find an impenetrable mist of doubt resting upon the alleged divineness of the greater part of the Old Testament? The more the listener hears the less he really knows, and the darker and more painful the uncertainty which seems to him to rest like a pall upon the Sacred Word. This is not the ordinary result of true science, nor is such a result in any sense desirable. Certainly there is nothing helpful to knowledge or to faith, and there may be much that is mischievous, in a process whose practical consequence is either a bundle of negations such as this address enumerates, or an accumulation of fog and surmise which leaves us half the time in doubt whether we are dealing with a veritable Book of God, or only—to use a phrase current in some critical circles—with a Jewish

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\* See the very acute remarks of Gladstone in his recent essay on this point; especially his suggestion as to "the fashions of the time and school" among specialists in this department; to the fact that many of their conclusions "appear in a great measure floating and uncertain"; and to the further fact of "war waged on critical grounds within the critical camp."—*The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*, pp. 6-15, Amer. Ed.

literature, not very much unlike the literature of other ancient nations.\*

How far the same negational and mystifying process may be carried by the Higher Criticism of this lower type, in dealing with the New Testament, the future alone can determine. Any one who has had occasion to note the history of this destructive process in Germany and in England—who knows how persistently the authorship of one of the four Gospels and the materials and sources and arrangement of the others have been questioned, how strenuously the authenticity and authoritativeness of some of the Epistles have been challenged, how openly the cardinal elements of miracle and prophecy have been rejected, how many essential doctrines have been either slighted or thrown aside, how much all that is supernatural has been boldly called in question or cast out altogether,—may well be anxious as to the issue. The whole problem happily lies at closer range, with its materials in more accessible form, and with fewer chances for dangerous divergence. The greater part of the New Testament can never be assigned to unknown authors or to other centuries, earlier or later. The story of Christ can never, like the stories of creation and the fall, be pronounced a holy legend or a poetical allegory; the Christian Church, born of the New Testament, is a living and an unchallengeable fact. Yet if the critics of this class can by their scientific methods reduce the Old Testament to the fragmentary, obscure, dissected, unat-

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\* It is of course to be understood that our acceptance of the Bible does not turn on the question of our ability to name the authors of the several books. Yet is it not hard to see what advantage is gained either to science or to experience by the process of obscuration on this point, in which some of the higher critics seem to find a pleasure in indulging? Cracking a nut to find it hollow, is not a nutritious or cheering business.

tractive, and innutritious condition in which this address describes it, who can tell what the same process may yet accomplish in the New? \*

I should do great injustice to this young science, and to its better representatives, if I were to charge them with any complicity with the bad issues and impressions to which reference has just been made. No fair mind can be indifferent to at least four marked benefits that have already come to Christian scholarship and to the whole Church of God from the sound and wise application of these critical principles: the historic development of the Hebraic legislation

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\* I have lately read a history of the *Development of Theology in Germany* since the age of Kant, by Dr. Pfeiderer, Prof. of Theology at Berlin. One part of the treatise is devoted to the record of certain theological developments in Great Britain during the same period. The reading of this volume, especially of the chapters on Criticism and Exegesis, has impressed me anew, and very painfully, by its exhibitions of the irreverent and reckless handling of the Bible by many German and some English scholars, and also of the speculative and skeptical doubts, verging toward positive unbelief, as to some important doctrines, such as miracle and prophecy, which stand in special relations to the inspiration and authoritativeness of the Word of God. I might fill pages with illustrations of the bold theorizing, the conflicting hypotheses, the destructive conjectures, the unbelieving temper and purpose, which have characterized in numerous instances the treatment of the Bible by this class of critics. Amid much that is or will be made valuable in future exegesis and future theologizing on the biblical basis, there is much which it would be very undesirable to import to our shores, or to introduce into our study of the Book of God. The undevout flippancy, the recklessness in speculation, the confident assertion of individual taste or opinion, the contemptuous indifference to the judgment of others or the beliefs of the Church, are traits which cannot find favor with the American mind; and, on the other hand, the evident lack of concord on many of the points discussed, and the hot warfare waged by one speculator against another, and other like phenomena, compel one to question in his own mind whether the whole process in its present stage is not doing more harm than good.

along lines both supernatural and natural, the beautiful growth of the Hebrew psalmody from the Davidic stock, the orderly progression of predictive prophecy, especially respecting Christ, and the wonderful, superhuman progress of doctrine in both the Old Testament and the New. These results enable us better to understand the Bible as an inspired Book, and fill us with a fresh sense of its unspeakable worth as a divine revelation. When all who claim to be higher critics shall cease from their conjectural dissections and reconstructions, and shall, by working along these loftier lines, give us positive results such as will expand thought and nourish intelligent faith, the title of Higher Criticism to a place among the Christian sciences will be much more clearly established.

#### INSPIRATION.

Passing on to the closely related matter of *Inspiration*, we are confronted at once by the question of terms. The words *verbal* and *dictation*, so often used in this address, are certainly misleading, if they are intended to describe the common doctrine of evangelical Protestantism on this subject. There are some Protestants who affirm an inspiration which is simply dictation throughout—the sacred writers being passive pens, or penmen, in the divine Hand, and every sentence and word being put into the text exactly as the divine Hand through these instruments placed it there. But this is not the universal, if, indeed, it be a general view. Most Protestants recognize the fact that there is also a distinct human element, a discernible human factor, in the composition of the Scriptures ; they see the personality of the writers as well as the voice of God in what is written. Protestantism also recognizes the great underlying fact that inspiration is not a single or simple but a very complex and multiform process, concerning itself sometimes

with general superintendence of what is recorded, sometimes exhibiting itself in the form of spiritual elevation, and in some portions of Scripture, though not in all, making itself visible in what is nothing less than direct or verbal dictation, word after word dropping immediately as from the lips of God.

But while Protestants differ among themselves as to the relative prominence and proportion of these varieties of inspiration, evangelical Protestantism holds fast by two things: First, that the original cause and author of the Bible as a book is not man, but God; and, therefore, that all merely naturalistic conceptions of it, all handling of it as if it were a Jewish literature merely, all interpreting of it as if it were composed by men, is a crime against God as its author. And secondly: That this primal divine agency was immediately concerned with the form, the language and expression, as well as with the substance of the Book, viewed as a revelation.\* It is at the latter

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\* A good statement of the common Protestant view may be found in the apologetic treatise of the revered theologian and teacher, Henry Boynton Smith: that divine influence by virtue of which the truths and facts given by Revelation, as well as other truths and facts pertaining to the Kingdom of God, are *spoken or written* in a truthful and authoritative manner. In the same treatise this author presents another definition: Inspiration gives us a book properly called the Word of God, inspired in all its parts. This inspiration is plenary in the sense of extending to all the parts, and of *extending also to the words*. This seems to be the position of Dr. Briggs himself in his interesting volume on *American Presbyterianism*, pp. 6-7, and also in his work on *Messianic Prophecy*. Lee defines inspiration as that actuating energy of the Holy Ghost which guided the prophets and apostles in officially proclaiming the will of God *by word of mouth*, and in *committing to writing* the several portions of the Bible.

Some writers on the subject (for example, Drs. Hodge and Warfield, *Presbyt. Review*, April, 1881) would claim more than this, yet they would doubtless accept this as being the most essential truth in the matter. They do not bind themselves to the old theory of an absolute verbal

point that the doctrine of the address seems seriously defective. The learned Professor avers that there is nothing divine in the letters, words, clauses, or style of the text,—that the relation of God to the Book appears simply in the giving of certain concepts, and that the embodiment of these concepts in human speech is simply the act of the men who received them. And this he presents as an adequate account of inspiration.

But what is a concept? Waiving the general definition of the term, which is inadequate here,\* a concept must in this connection be simply some thought or impression conveyed to the mind by God without being embodied in language—some suggestion respecting spiritual things divinely communicated to certain persons preternaturally qualified to receive such suggestion without the medium of words. It is a grave question in psychology whether a thought, an idea, can exist in the human mind in this disembodied con-

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or mechanical dictation throughout, as their interesting and able treatise clearly shows. Dr. Charles Hodge directly rejects the mechanical theory. "The Church has never held what has been stigmatized as the mechanical theory of inspiration. The sacred writers were not machines, etc." *Syst. Theol.*, I., 157. See his definition of the term, plenary inspiration, I., 165.

\* In philosophic usage the term is defined (*Century Dict.*) as a general notion, or an immediate object of thought in simple apprehension, or (*Webster*) an abstract general conception. Coleridge defines *conception* as a conscious act of the understanding, bringing some given object or impression into the mind in certain relations to other objects, and the concept is the product of such conscious action. Kant (*Critique*) says that the understanding is the faculty of thinking, and thinking is knowledge by means of concepts. Hamilton (*Logic*) says that in the forming of concepts or general notions the mind compares, disjoins, or conjoins attributes. A concept is *clear* when its object as a whole can be distinguished from any other: it is *distinct* when its several parts can be distinguished from each other (Fleming, *Vocab. Phil.*). These definitions clearly imply the necessary use of language in the formation as in the description of our concepts.

dition, yet no one can deny that for such a purpose as the creation of Scripture God might empower certain minds to discern and receive truth without the help of language. But if this be granted, is it not clear that this peculiar process is not inspiration, but revelation? Are not two things which are very different confused here, the imparting of knowledge and the recording of it? Inspiration is, in fact, the recording of revelations previously received, and of whatever else is essential to the proper apprehending of these revelations. Is this act of recording one in which God concerns Himself, or is it the act of men, who are constantly exposed to such mistakes or defects as are incident to human fallibility, so that the record becomes at last only their account of certain concepts which God once gave them? How can their account have any authority for us, unless we have reason to believe that they were divinely empowered, divinely guided, not merely in receiving, but also in describing their concepts and transmitting them to the world? If there is no distinct, positive, theopneustic element or process in such description and transmission, what does the result become to us but an inadequate human communication, void of all spiritual authoritativeness? And when the whole case is further obscured by bringing the matter of authorship into doubt as to name and date, conditions and purpose, and by affirming that on all these contributory points the great mass of the Old Testament, for example, is substantially a *terra incognita*, what real weight can we attach to such a communication as a true message from God?

But further: the Bible is not a mere series of reported concepts; it is also a history, a biography, a ritual and psalmody, a collection of prophecies, a statement of doctrines, a law, a transcript and summary of human duties, a manual on character, a proclamation of grace, a way of life.

The concept theory furnishes no intelligible explanation of these elements in Holy Scripture—no account especially as to those facts and declarations of the Gospel respecting which what we need is a clear, faithful, reliable record. The definition gives us, for example, no apprehensible description of the process by which the four evangelists set forth in detail the various events, acts, teachings, journeys, experiences, in the life of our blessed Lord. The Book of Acts is in no sense whatever a book of concepts: the Pentecost was an event, not a suggestion conveyed to the mind of Luke without the medium of words, and then described by him in such language as he could command.

Dr. Briggs finds a refuge from this inevitable conclusion by introducing, in another connection, the theory of a general divine superintendence, which is exhibited especially in those portions of the Bible that are biographic or historic—those which deal with what he regards as the circumstantial rather than essentials of the divine revelation. After averring in strong terms that errors do in fact exist in these portions, although such superintendence has been exercised over them, he proceeds to define this superintendence in the following words: “It may be that this providential superintendence gives infallible guidance in every particular; and it may be that it differs but little, if at all, from the providential superintendence of the fathers and schoolmen and theologians of the Christian Church.” This certainly is no sufficient explanation. Have we not a right to ask, with great earnestness, whether so colorless and inert a concept as this has any title to a place among legitimate theories of inspiration? Is it true that there is no distinction which is discernible and vital between, for example, the inspiration of the four narratives respecting Christ, where the theory of imparted concepts cannot be applied, and that gracious aid and guidance which ordinary

believers enjoy? Under such a statement, what is inspiration except an uncertain name?

The conclusion of the matter, according to the common verdict of Protestantism, is that inspiration, as a divine process, must concern itself, not with the reception only, but also and specially with the impartation of divine truth, and, therefore, that it cannot exist in any other form than in connection with language. To maintain, under whatever plausible theory, that the language introduced is the contribution of man only, is either to destroy inspiration altogether or to make of it a speculative fiction with which the Christian mind, seeking for some true and valid foundation for its faith, can never be satisfied. In this position all evangelical schools and grades of opinion, however widely they may divide in their definitions, are heartily agreed. Plenary inspiration, all will affirm, is an inspiration of language as truly as of thought.

#### INERRANCY.

We are now brought to another problem vitally connected with the two preceding topics—the problem of *Inerrancy*. Here again we are in need of careful definition and discrimination. The term is employed by the author as if it could refer only to the biographic and historic portions of the Bible, to the circumstantial, but not the essentials. But I can discern no reason in the nature of the case why, if there be errors scattered through the narratives and histories of Scripture, there may not be errors, all the more dangerous because we cannot so easily discover them, in the statements made by fallible men in fallible language respecting the concepts which God gave them as to the principles, the laws, the doctrines, the most essential and saving elements in His revelation.\* The proper definition

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\* If the sacred writers have made mistakes in the circumstantial of

of the term inerrancy is not exactness, but accuracy—freedom or exemption from error. It does not imply that each sacred writer told the whole story of that which he describes, but simply that he was accurate in what he did record. Nor does it imply that there must always be a verbal parallelism, as in the case of quotations from the older Scriptures, if the real sense and teaching of the passage quoted are given. Nor does it require verbal exactness at every point, as in the case of the four differing inscriptions reported by the four evangelists as having been placed above the head of the crucified Christ. Neither does it demand that an exact historical order shall be preserved when, as in the narrative of the temptation of our Lord, the substance of the impressive fact is truly related. Variations in the structure of a story, the transposition of events, changes in the order of a narrative, repetitions of the same event in different form or connection, are by no means inconsistent with a true and plenary and inerrant inspiration. Still less is it necessary that now, after so many centuries of possible inadvertence in transcription and otherwise, we should be able, under conditions so changed, to discern in every detail the circumstantial harmony which may have been entirely manifest to those who first heard or read the sacred story.

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Scripture where accuracy is comparatively easy, the natural presumption is that they fell into mistakes in dealing with those more essential matters where accuracy is certainly more difficult, and where, it may be added, error is a thousandfold more dangerous. This conclusion cannot be avoided except by the assumption that in the recording of these essentials they were inspired in a special sense and measure, and were thereby saved from the mistakes into which they were suffered to fall in their historic or biographic work. But this assumption, with all that it implies, is certainly open to very serious question. It offers to us a Bible some parts of which are infallible, while others are fallible, but gives us no clue or key by which we can distinguish the first class from the second.

It certainly is enough for us all if, at this distance of time and place, we are satisfied that the Bible is exempt from any and all error which would in any way impair its claim to be an adequate and trustworthy revelation from God.

I may allude in passing to a singular logomachy which has arisen at this point respecting the original manuscripts of the books of the Bible. On one side it is affirmed that if we could but examine these original manuscripts, we should find them absolutely free from each and every form of error or discrepancy. Admitting that certain discrepancies and errors are found in the copies of these manuscripts that have been preserved for us, this party would maintain that everything of this sort must have crept in at some later date. On the other side it is affirmed that there are some of these errors and discrepancies which cannot be explained through mistake in transcription or obscuration of time or any other like cause—which must have been in the original manuscripts at the outset. The first party create a very strong presumption in their favor by pointing to God as the author of the Bible, to the nature of inspiration as a process in which the minds of the writers were lifted above their ordinary exposure to mistake, to the general testimony of Scripture in favor of its own inerrancy, and to its avowed aim and purpose as an infallible guide to everlasting life. The second party create an opposing presumption drawn from the numerous instances where discrepancy or error appear in our present copies which cannot be explained on any theory of subsequent changes, but must, as they affirm, have existed in the original writings.

For myself I frankly say that the first presumption seems far stronger than the second; and the fact that I am unable to remove the latter by any explanatory process does not compel me to abandon the first. If I must make

either affirmation, I deliberately prefer the position of inerrancy, however serious the difficulties that confront me from the second quarter. But have I a right to require that other Christian minds shall take the same position at the peril of being counted as disloyal to Holy Writ if they refuse? On the other hand, have they any right to enforce their presumption of errancy upon me? When we remember that the oldest extant copy of the Old Testament is less than a thousand years old, and at least fourteen or fifteen centuries more recent than the date of the latest portions of this earlier half of Scripture,—that the oldest copies of the New Testament belong at the farthest to the fourth or fifth century of the Christian era,—that all these books were preserved for many hundred years on parchment or linen by the slow process of copying, often by ignorant and incompetent hands, and sometimes by those who sought to improve the original text,—and that all the ancient versions and other helps to the proper understanding of those originals have passed through the same process and themselves bear the same marks of present imperfection, why under such conditions should we disturb one another with sharp controversy over something which we have never seen or can see, and which none of us can ever adduce as decisive proof of the accuracy of his individual presumption in the case? Can any authoritative theory of inspiration be builded up on either of these hypotheses? And does not the controversy, as we now behold it, seem to possess all the elements of an interminable, and perchance a mischievous, logomachy?\*

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\* It seems to be supposed by the advocates of the absolute inerrancy of the original Scriptures in every minute detail, that their view is sustained in some way by the creed of our Church. The plain fact is, that there is not a single sentence or phrase in our Confession (or, indeed, in any Protestant Symbol,) by which a man could be con-

On the other hand, I have been led, after some examination of the matter, to suspect that some of the biblical critics, in their effort to maintain a particular opinion as to inspiration, have made much more than the facts warrant, or than is prudent in Christian men, of existing discrepancies in the Bible. The existence of such discrepancies is not to be denied. Yet ought not this fact to be so stated that it shall not seriously disturb our faith? When our Confession (chap. i. 8) declares that the Sacred Books have by the singular care and providence of God been kept pure in all ages, this does not imply that copyists and translators were, like the original authors, inspired or were miraculously kept from error. The wonder of thoughtful minds is that a book which required fifteen centuries for its formation, by many writers in several languages, and under most diverse conditions, should after its completion and compilation have passed through so many exposures and been transmitted through processes so likely to impair its original statements, and at last should have come down to us after eighteen centuries so free from serious error on any essential point of doctrine or duty, so void of contradictions or even of important historic discrepancies, that we have no difficulty in receiving and embracing it as in its totality the very Word of God. Whatever may have

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victed of heresy who should affirm that in his judgment there were errors of this class in some of the books of Scripture as originally written. Our creed is much less specific on this point than is commonly supposed—much less, in fact, than is the general belief of the Church itself in our time. The doctrine of inspiration, as most of us hold it, is an historic growth, subsequent to the Westminster Assembly, and, indeed, chiefly within this century. In condemning departures from that doctrine, it is well to remember that we as Presbyterians can go no farther ecclesiastically than our own Confession warrants; later opinion, however current, is not a constitutional basis for discipline.

been its exact original form, whatever the changes and vicissitudes to which it has been subject through the centuries, and whatever questions may be started as to the best way of explaining some perplexities which here and there arise in our study of it, we may reverently accept it without any solicitude as being an inerrant revelation, entirely adequate to guide us and all men from earth to heaven.

How shall we as Christian men treat such discrepancies as do in fact appear in the present Scriptures? At the outset it would seem to be our duty to guard ourselves against the serious mistake of endeavoring, under the influence of a desire to build up one theory of inspiration or to throw down another theory, to magnify this admitted difficulty, whether by enlarging the number of such discrepancies or by emphasizing their importance. If the critic should find a thousand of them in the Bible as he has it, he could never prove that any given number, or even any single one of them, was actually in the original manuscripts, and therefore he could never prove by this process that the original Scriptures were not inerrant. He might create a presumption against their inerrancy, but his argument would be a presumptive argument only, and the presumption is one which he could not present as a sufficient basis for a theory of inspiration, or a conclusive key to biblical interpretation, or for which he could claim the approval of other minds. And may it not be seriously asked here whether the motive that inspires him, right enough in itself, really justifies a procedure which has in it, as all can see, so many elements of danger to the common faith? What truth would be brought out, what doctrine made clearer, what duty more strongly enforced, by such an accumulation of actual or possible defects discovered or supposed to be discovered in the written Word? Why, for example, should Dr. Briggs desire first to reduce the doctrine

of inspiration into a peculiarly speculative, slender, evanescent form, and then make such inspiration still more intangible and dubious by emphasizing so strongly the errancies and aberrations of Scripture? How is the Biblical Theology, of which he is the elect representative, to be aided by showing that the Book from which it is derived is marred by multiform errors?

We may learn a practical lesson here from the great English apologists of the last century, Leslie, Warburton, Leland, and their compeers. No critic of our day, German or British or American, could bring together a stronger array of discrepancies, contradictions, errors, than may be found in the writings of Toland, Collins, Woolston, Tindal, Chubb, and their associates among the English Deists of that dark period. Thomas Paine and the *Age of Reason* may be said to have brought their malevolent work of aspersion to its final consummation. But the noble school of apologists to whom I have referred gave themselves resolutely to the task of answering these unworthy aspersions upon the Bible, of explaining the alleged errors, of disproving the asserted contradictions, of harmonizing discrepancies wherever this was possible, and of showing in general that, after all, the Bible was a true revelation, worthy of universal credence. They accepted the challenge of Deism on every field, and on every field they won a decisive victory for the Divine Word and for the common Christianity. The hostile researches of another century, the investigations and incongruous affirmations of the German criticism, the speculative problems and perplexities raised in various quarters since their day, have not increased the difficulty of like defence in our time; and, on the other hand, the wider knowledge, the larger scholarship, and better equipment which we enjoy make the conflict and the victory more easy and more sure. If we but enter upon

the task in their spirit of reverential loyalty to the Word, with a controlling desire to make the least rather than the most of every difficulty, we, like them, shall have the privilege of seeing such difficulty for the most part disappear.

When the whole matter of discrepancy has been reduced to its lowest dimensions by processes of analysis and explanation such as these, it may be reduced still further by reference to the long process of transcription running through many centuries, with some possibility of error or corruption at every stage. While no one could affirm that all discrepancy can be explained by such reference, Christian minds will generally admit that very much can be so explained. And if to this source of helpful light there be added the historic obscurations that have come through the long ages upon the sacred text, rendering inscrutable to us many things which were entirely plain to those who lived when the text was written, or shortly after, we have another source of relief from perplexity, of probably greater value than most have been accustomed to suppose. I have an impression also that Higher Criticism, as it shall advance into the stage of a positive and matured science, will be found to be exceedingly helpful in this direction,—just as Assyriology and Egyptology are already explaining many biblical obscurities and confirming our faith in certain historical parts of Scripture. And I further believe in my inmost heart that by these, and by other kindred processes that might be named, this whole matter of errancy can be reduced to such insignificant dimensions that it would never unsettle intelligent faith or disturb in any way the harmony of the Church.\*

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\* Charles Hodge; *Syst. Theol.*, vol. i., 151–170, on inspiration and inerrancy, especially pp. 169, 170, on the way of regarding and treating existing discrepancies. Also, Lee on *Inspiration*, especially Lect.

## MIRACLE.

A word in passing with regard to two other barriers which Professor Briggs charges the theologians with having erected against the new science of Biblical Theology,—false views of *Miracle* and false views of *Prophecy*. The affirmations of the address on the first point are, that miracles are of less moment to the Christian system than the modern apologists have been accustomed to maintain; that they are not widely diffused through the Scriptures, but are limited to two or three specific periods in the development of the scheme of grace; that they are always miracles of redemption; that they are wrought chiefly to illustrate the saving love of Christ and the process of our salvation; that nothing would be lost from their practical value if they were regarded simply as extraordinary acts of Providence in accordance with the laws of nature; that if the miracles of Christ could be explained by the use of hypnotism or by some other occult natural agency, nothing essential would be lost out of them; and that the theories of miracles taught in the Church are human inventions merely. The address does not suggest what some critics are now openly affirming, that the presence of miracle in the Bible is a positive difficulty in the way of belief, but it certainly makes no distinct reference to that grand function of miracle as an evidential adjunct to Scripture, without which the explanation and defence of miracle are well-nigh impossible.

What is a miracle? A miracle is a specific act produced within the sphere of nature or of humanity, not by any

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viii. ; H. B. Smith, *Introd. to Christ. Theol.*, ch. v., Part II., III. ; Shedd, *Syst. Theol.*, vol. i., 93-110. “Minor variations are not inconsistent with plenary inspiration. . . . They are also compatible with an infallible account.”

occult force in nature, but by the direct efficiency of God, for the purpose of attesting some truth or promise, or of demonstrating the divine authorship of some scheme or process of government or of redemption. It is not important here to state the proof that miracle can occur, or that such occurrence can be proved, or that God is immediately in every miracle, according to the testimony of Scripture. But it is important to say that miracles are very widely diffused through the Bible ; that, especially in the Old Testament, they are often miracles of providence, of power and authority, or of retribution, rather than of grace ; that while they do in many cases gloriously illustrate the love of the Saviour and the methods by which the soul is saved, they are always represented as having a wider attestational function ; and that, instead of being obstructional or unimportant, they are of inestimable moment as witnesses to the inspiration and the authoritativeness of the whole Bible.

#### PROPHECY.

Respecting prophecy, Dr. Briggs denies that it constitutes in any direct sense a history before the time ; he quotes Kuenen with approval as having shown that many Old Testament prophecies, instead of having come to pass, have actually been reversed by history ; he affirms for himself that the great body of Messianic prediction not only never has been, but cannot now or at any time in the future be fulfilled. He does not side directly with that school of criticism which is now inclined to hold that there is in fact no predictive element in the Old Testament, and that the prophets were simply and solely religious teachers, whose strong declarations respecting men and cities and nations have been entirely misapprehended by the modern Church. But the illustration which he adduces as an instance of unfulfilled prophecy, the minatory declaration of

Jehovah by the mouth of Joshua, afterwards modified upon the repentance of the monarch and people of Nineveh,\* shows how imperfect and how injurious in some aspects his theory of prophecy must be. We have only to analyze the great fact of prophecy more closely, and to study that great fact in its evidential relation to Scripture, to see just where the imperfection and the injury lie.

It is true that the Westminster divines made no reference to prophecy or miracle, or to the grand attestational argument drawn from the history of the Bible and from its moral influence, in their list of the evidences by which the Book certifies itself to us as from God. This is an obvious defect in their Confession, and one that justifies its revision. But this defect has been fully made up by the apologists of later times, and the combined arguments from miracle and prophecy now stand out, in the apprehension of Protestantism, as an impregnable defence of Holy Scripture. It may be that in developing this composite argument some of these apologists have magnified unduly these external defences, but certainly it is now too late for any intelligent

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\* To quote the minatory declaration of God against Nineveh, taken in connection with the subsequent repentance of the people and the consequent change in the divine dealing with them, as an instance of unfulfilled prediction, certainly involves a grave misapprehension of the nature and function of prophecy. To draw from this and similar instances in the Old Testament where conditional judgments are threatened but afterwards withheld, the inference that many divine predictions have been *reversed by history*, is a still more serious mistake. Respecting the affirmation that there lies embodied in the brief book of Jonah "the gospel of infant salvation and the gospel of heathen salvation," one cannot avoid being surprised, whether we consider it as theology or as exegesis. How much more impressive is the profound remark of Edwards: "Where Scripture History fails, there Prophecy takes its place; so is the account still carried forward, and the chain is not broken till we come to the very last link—the consummation of all things."

Protestant to decry or to ignore them. The inward witness for the Word, the testimony of the Christian consciousness in its behalf, precious as it is, can nevermore render needless this sublime external testimony. Surely, surely, it is useless to disparage miracle so long as the transcendent story of the resurrection of our Lord, the crowning miracle of Christianity, stands unimpeached and unimpeachable on the sacred page. And as for prophecy, so long as Tyre stands a perished city by the sea ; so long as many centuries of time attest the truthfulness of the solemn predictions respecting Egypt and Moab and Assyria ; so long as the numerous and explicit predictions of the Old Testament concerning Christ are so clearly verified in the four evangelists ; so long as the clear prophecies of Christ respecting His own death and resurrection, respecting the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jewish people, respecting the development and progress of His Gospel and its expanding career on earth, remain unquestioned in the Bible, it will be vain to deprecate the presence or the worth of prophecy in the Christian scheme.\*

#### BIBLICAL AND SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY.

After these various and long digressions into adjacent fields of thought, we have now come to the main and the final topic in this important address. The chief aim of the author, as has been already stated, is to set forth the nature and claims of *Biblical Theology* as a science worthy of a high place in our theological curriculum. In order to secure recognition for this new science, he seems to think it needful to disparage Systematic Theology and its repre-

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\* On the worth of Miracles, note the admirable presentation by Henry B. Smith, *Apologetics*, chap. iv.; and on Prophecy and its Fulfilment, see his *Introduction*, pp. 162-167.

sentatives in language probably never before applied on such an occasion in such a way. We listen in wonder to his profuse arraignment of these representatives, some of whom are among the most eminent names on the roll of Protestantism. They are not only theologians and apologists and theologizers, but also dogmatists and dogmaticians; the scholastics and ecclesiastics of Protestantism and blind defenders of traditionalism; engaged in putting up barriers of dogmatism against the truth; substituting a human rule of faith for the authority of God; shutting out the light and obstructing the life of God, and obtruding themselves in the way of devout seekers after God; representatives of priestcraft, ceremonialism, and dead orthodoxy; depreciating the Church and the Reason, and treating even the Bible as if it were a baby; reasoning falsely in a circle and yet in utter unconsciousness, while they thrust their fallacies and deceits in the face of other men, and create ghosts of evangelicalism to frighten children; well-meaning but misguided, resting in their own conceits and follies rather than in the written Word; inculcating a hard and fast system of dogma in which they beg their premises and jump at their conclusions; exaggerating, misunderstanding, and even perverting the doctrines of Scripture; teaching bugbears and magical transformations and other conceits, derived from the ethnic religions, without any basis in the Bible or Christian experience or the Christian creeds; at the same time culpably neglecting the ethical portions of both the Old and the New Testaments, and especially the ethics of Christ; and so on and on.

The science of Systematic Theology, justified by more than three centuries of healthful development, graced by many illustrious names from Melanethon and Calvin down to the honored teachers of our own time, dead and living, and well approved by the Church in its general temper,

principles, processes, and results, needs no eulogy or defence from me. That it is yet a complete science, perfect in all its methods and absolutely secure and final in all its conclusions, no wise representative of it would claim. That some of its representatives have been prone to follow precedent rather than Scripture, to rest too much in philosophical or metaphysical reasonings, to fabricate systems too largely from their own fancy, and so to diverge overmuch from the straight line of biblical teaching and biblical authority, no one ought to deny. But that it is a real science, based on sound principles in the main, prosecuted for the most part in an intelligent and faithful spirit, and therefore worthy of respect from considerate men, may be safely affirmed. In regard to this singular assault upon this science and its representatives at such an inopportune time and place I propose to say nothing now excepting this: that a poorer way of commanding a new science and a new professorship to popular sympathy and confidence could not possibly have been invented. And the attitude which the author in this connection assumes for himself as the elect leader of another theological advance or crusade which is to sweep or burn away all this dead orthodoxy, this effete ecclesiasticism, this formal morality, and to introduce in their stead a new life and a new age in theology and in Christian experience—a reformation grander, as he assures us, than that of the sixteenth century—is neither diffident nor safe. It remains to be seen whether, in familiar phrase, the vigor and success of the war will at all equal the sounding phrases of the manifesto.\*

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\* One who has the privilege of teaching theology in the systematic form would be culpable, if he should allow these reflections in his favorite pursuit to warp in the least degree his estimate of the interest and the value attaching to this new science of Biblical Theology. He should rather welcome it as a mode of presenting in fresh and in

## BIBLICAL THEOLOGY DEFINED.

Dr. Briggs defines Biblical Theology, which stands in his apprehension so far above Systematic Theology, as *the Theology of the Bible*. This is a promising phrase, but rather too general and vague to be useful. In the Appendix he further defines it as that theological discipline which presents the theology of the Bible in its historical formation within the sacred writings. He again describes it as Biblical Dogmatics,—that part of dogmatics which rests upon the Bible and derives its material from the Bible by the legitimate use of its principles. Is there not in these definitions a half-concealed assumption of special scripturality, of a higher and purer biblical quality than is to be found in Systematic Theology? Dr. Shedd tells us (*Dogmatic Theol.*, i., 12–15) that the biblical, like the systematic method of theologizing, may construct a biblical or an un-biblical book, an evangelical or a rationalistic treatise, a theistic or a pantheistic scheme. As a matter of fact, he says, all varieties of orthodoxy and of heterodoxy may be found within this new department, and he points us to Germany for the evidence. And then he shrewdly adds: As we have to ask respecting systematic theology whose theology it is, so also in regard to biblical theology we must

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some respects specially effective ways, the Truth of God. To study thoughtfully and as separate from all other, the theology of some man like John or Peter or Paul, or the theology of some single epistle like the Galatian or the Ephesian, or some group of epistles like the Pastoral, is in itself a most delightful task, and one which the writer from a long experience would heartily commend, especially to the younger ministers of our Church. They will not be likely to find much new truth, but they will discern the old truths in fresher form and coloring, and perhaps in greater attractiveness. How such a study can be at variance with Systematic Theology, it is hard for a plain mind to conceive.

ask whose biblical theology it is. On his authority we may, therefore, conclude that biblical theology is not more biblical by necessity than systematic theology is. In this instance what we have are simply the opinions of Professor Briggs, after the most thorough examination which he can give respecting the doctrinal contents of this or that book, or the personal teachings of this or that inspired writer, or the general doctrine found by him in some broader division of the Bible, or in the Bible as a whole. *What now are these opinions*, as presented in this address?

#### BIBLICAL THEOLOGY CONCERNING GOD.

Passing by what is said in a suggestive way respecting the theophanies and institutions of the Old Testament, and of the religious system of the Hebrews, we come at once upon his exposition of the contents of the Bible under the three main heads: God, Man, Redemption. Under the first head he remarks that a new doctrine of *God*, high above the most skilful constructions of the systematic theologians, is one of the greatest needs of our time. He proceeds further to say that we do not need a Bible to teach us that God is just; that the favorite attribute of the Bible is mercy; that all our creeds and systems of divinity exaggerate the divine justice, and indicate a fear lest God should be regarded as too merciful; and that the love of God for the world will shine out as the one great truth for man to know when all the creeds and theologies shall have been buried (so he prophesies) in the oblivion of the eternities. As we calmly weigh these sentences, we fall at once to wondering whether we are really getting something new and lofty beyond all antecedent conceptions of the Deity, or are listening to an old half-truth stated in fresh and rather oracular form. What on this view is to become of all those portions of the Old Testament (from which

the theology of the author seems to be very largely drawn) which tell us so frequently and impressively of the holy sovereignty of God,—of His law and commandments, His righteous administration, His faithful warnings against sin, His holy judgments, His terrible retributions? Do we not need the Bible to tell us of all this, as well as to set forth the divine mercy? How can that mercy be comprehended at all except in its relations to the divine justice? And is Biblical Theology to devote itself simply to the exposition and collation of one among the divine attributes, while ignoring or counting as secondary all the rest? Where in such a theology as is proposed do we find room for the fundamental doctrine of the moral or even the providential government of God; and how can we on such a basis explain the impressive facts of His administration, or interpret His imperative and holy statutes, or join with patriarchs and psalmists and prophets in those solemn ascriptions of praise and adoration which sound magnificent, like organ peals, through the older Scriptures?

I have been accustomed to think that our own well-poised and comprehensive Confession, when it (chap. i., 1) describes God on one hand as “most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him,” and then describes Him on the other hand as “most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of His most righteous will; also most just and terrible in His judgments and hating all sin,” presents us with a thoroughly biblical view of God, the result of a profound study of His Word, not in a few passages here and there, but throughout, and therefore worthy of universal acceptance among Christians substantially as it stands. Individual theologians and some schools of Calvinistic theology

may have emphasized overmuch the severer side of this biblical portraiture, and there is ground for the general admission that the Confession itself, in its subsequent application of the doctrine, has not sufficiently kept in deserved prominence the love of God for the world, and the sincerity and fullness of His desire that all men should come back to Him in penitence and faith.\* But notwithstanding such facts, we may still present this portraiture not merely as one that is worthy of universal acceptance, but one that in its essence is practically recognized by evangelical minds of every name as a full and sound and unquestionable deduction from what the Bible, and the whole Bible, teaches on this subject.

Biblical Theology can do no better than to accept, not the favorite attribute of mercy alone, but the essential attribute of justice, and all the other attributes and perfections of the Deity also, and endeavor to blend the whole in one harmonious, sublime, glorious, and most winning concept of Him in all that makes Him God over all, blessed

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\* It is a suggestive fact in this connection that a very large proportion of the Presbyteries of our Church have recently petitioned the General Assembly for such changes in our Confession as shall bring this grand doctrine more fully into view, and that the General Assembly has recognized the propriety of the petition, and has made provision to secure the improvement desired. But it is also a suggestive fact that many of these Presbyteries have expressed their earnest wish that in making this change nothing should be introduced into the Confession that would in any way impair the great antithetic doctrine of the justice and holy sovereignty of God, and the General Assembly has declared that nothing of this sort shall be allowed. It may be inferred that the Presbyterian Church with which we are identified intends to hold not one part of the truth, but the whole truth, on this subject, and will repudiate any narrower view from either quarter. And what is true of our own Church is true, so far as appears, of the Presbyterians of England and Scotland and elsewhere. There are no signs anywhere of a disposition to abandon the distinctive principles of Calvinism.

forever. When it has done this, it will not find itself very far removed from the existing doctrine as set forth in our own creed and in the symbols of Protestantism generally, and as explained in our best current theologies. But if Biblical Theology proposes to itself to push into the background one side of this Scriptural portraiture, as the address intimates, and to exalt the other side as the favorite and the needful view of God for such an age as this, with its loose sentimentalisms in religion and its painful lack of sturdy emphasis upon those granite principles of justice on which the throne of God is eternally reared, then I greatly fear that Biblical Theology will drift, all unconsciously, into a swift current of departure from sound doctrine on this point which such a Church as ours will not be able to approve. No Biblical Theology of this type is worth half as much as the plain, comprehensive, thoroughly Scriptural definition in our Shorter Catechism.\*

#### BIBLICAL THEOLOGY CONCERNING MAN.

The very brief statements in the address respecting the biblical doctrine of *Man* do not demand attention beyond some frank recognition of their meagreness, except at two points; of which the first is the declaration that Protestant theologians have greatly exaggerated the doctrine of orig-

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\* It would be useless to begin to quote references from Calvinistic theologians like Hodge and Smith and Shedd, and a hundred others, with regard to the danger of such a partial theology as seems to be inculcated in the address. See especially H. B. Smith, *Syst. of Christ. Theol.*, Part I., chap. viii., on the Divine Love, and chap. x., on the Divine Justice.

Dorner (*Syst. of Christ. Doct.*, vol. iv., 77) says: "The one-sided emphasizing of a divine love apart from justice is essentially Antinomian in nature; and in all its possible forms, however lofty they may seem, sinks back into an unethical and, in so far, essentially physical ground."

inal righteousness—the righteousness which our first parents had before the fall—in order to emphasize by contrast their dogma of original sin. This declaration is unsustained by any proof, and is probably incapable of proof on any large scale. Standing where it does, in conjunction with other statements respecting the first temptation as a necessary means of grace, and sin as a temporary or transitional condition, it bears itself some marks of an exaggeration.

The second and more important point is the affirmation that Biblical Theology reveals to us in the Scriptures the fact of a race origin, of a race sin, of a race ideal, and also of a race redeemer and a race redemption. What the phrase, a race redeemer, signifies it is not easy to determine in such a connection. If it simply implies that Christ, in His person, character, sacrifice, mediatorial mission, was inherently competent to save all mankind, and that His Gospel is in a true sense provided for all and available for all, and therefore to be freely offered to all on condition of repentance and faith, there is in it nothing more or less than is found habitually in the current theologies and in the ordinary sermons of our day. Does the author intend to say more? Is the universality that attaches to sin in its origin and its development, to be affirmed in an unconditioned or unlimited form in respect to the Redeemer also? He is able inherently to save all men, even the race, but does He save the race in fact?

So of the corresponding phrase—a race redemption. If this simply means that the salvation provided in Christ for mankind will ultimately reach so far and widely, will be made effectual in so large a proportion of mankind, that it might well be called universal, a redemption of humanity, the proposition is one in which Protestants generally in this age are agreed. I find a significant parallel to it in the theological writings of a certain teacher whom Dr. Briggs

regards as wholly wedded to a strict traditionalism: "We have reason to believe that the number of the finally lost, in comparison with the whole number of the saved, will be very inconsiderable. Our blessed Lord, when surrounded by the innumerable company of the redeemed, will be hailed as the *Salvator Hominum*, the Saviour of men."\* But does Biblical Theology teach us anything more than this? Is there to be a race redemption in any sense more comprehensive, more universal? The author explains himself in another place by the statement that, though the Bible teaches the salvation of the world, of the race of man, it does not teach universal salvation. Still further explanation may be found in his statement, which is obvious enough, that some theologians, under the influence of a narrow view of election as to its definiteness and its range, have formed too low an estimate of the freeness and extent, the cosmic quality and efficacy, of the scheme of grace.

#### BIBLICAL THEOLOGY CONCERNING REDEMPTION.

Perhaps the account of *Redemption* under the third general head of Biblical doctrine, explains still further the position of the author. He habitually contemplates that redemption on its subjective rather than its objective side: he accepts the *Christus in nobis* of the Lutheran theology more cordially than the *Christus pro nobis* of Calvinism. Redemption, in his view, is the transformation of the sinful and suffering race of man into the image of God, as He is made manifest in Christ; and this transformation in-

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\* Hodge, *Syst. Theol.*, vol. iii., 879, 880; see also vol. i. Shedd, *Syst. Theol.*, vol. i., 422: "The number of the lost angels and men is small, compared with the whole number of rational creatures. Sin is a speck upon the infinite azure of eternity. Hell is a corner of the universe; it is a hole or pit, not an ocean: bottomless but not boundless." Also vol. ii., 745.

cludes the whole nature and the whole life of man, and indeed of the race. His references to this transformation, especially as connected with his view of the Messiahship, are worthy of the closest attention. But here again he arraigns the theologians, on the ground that they do not contemplate redemption in its fullness: more specifically that they emphasize unduly the beginnings of redemption in our justification by faith, and also our regeneration, as distinct from the work of sanctification. He alleges that modern theology does not comprehend the process of grace in its fullness—does not treat as it ought of renovation and transformation and sanctification, of faith and repentance and holy love. Respecting this general arraignment, which is a blemish upon a discussion that otherwise attracts sympathy, it is enough to say here that it would be hard to find a theological treatise of our time which would justify such a charge.

But the chief issue of the author with modern theology in this connection is found in what he describes as a limitation of the process of redemption to this world, and it is here that modern theology of the Protestant type finds one of its most serious issues with him. He tells us that the Protestant theologians, even more than the Roman Catholic, have neglected those vast periods of time which lie between death and the resurrection. He tells us that the bugbear of a judgment immediately after death,—in other words, a final division and separation of men as individuals occurring at death, on the basis of character, under a specific adjudication by God in Christ,—is a conceit imported from the ethnic or natural religions, and without any basis whatever in the Bible or in Christian experience or the Christian symbols; and he further denounces the doctrine as something calculated to make death a terror to the best of men. In the same strain he protests against what he

styles the illusion of a magical transformation of the soul at death into a condition of immediate and perfect holiness. This illusion comes—he tells us—from the same pagan sources, is equally unsustained by Scripture, cuts the nerve of Christian activity and effort after holiness, and makes our human life and experience of no value. Both of these common doctrines, he affirms in impassioned words, are hurtful and unchristian errors, which ought to be banished from the world. And as a substitute for them he proposes the dogma of a progressive sanctification, to be carried on through the intermediate state, and as far as the day of final judgment—a dogma for which he claims the indorsement, not only of the Bible, but also of Christian orthodoxy and Christian experience.

If the phrase, progressive sanctification, simply means that the sainted dead continue even through all eternity to grow in all the graces and virtues which constitute the Christian character on earth, there is nothing in it beyond what most believers hold—nothing that is in any degree new or specially helpful as a fresh contribution to faith. The living unto righteousness which our Catechism gives as the second element of sanctification, is by its own nature a state of the soul which may be said never to reach an end or a culmination, even throughout eternity. What is to be said of the first element in that familiar definition, the dying more and more unto sin? Does the author hold that the saint carries with him into the eternal state some remaining taints and seeds of sin, which are to be progressively eliminated by the discipline of that state, so that he becomes entirely free from sin and its pollutions only after untold ages of existence in that intermediate world? The favorable terms in which he refers to the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatorial purification in the case of imperfect saints, would seem to imply that what has just been stated

is in substance his personal belief. How marked the contrast is between any such concept of a dying unto sin on the part of believers in eternity and the current conviction of Protestantism, may be seen in the simple, beautiful, pathetic sentence in our Shorter Catechism: The souls of believers are *at their death* made perfect in holiness, and do *immediately* pass into glory. The broadened form of this statement in the Larger Catechism is still more simple, beautiful, pathetic: The communion in glory with Christ which the members of the invisible Church enjoy *immediately after death*, is in that their souls are *then* made perfect in holiness, and received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory. How Dr. Briggs, in the presence of such declarations as these, can affirm that the doctrine of immediate sanctification at death has no warrant in the creeds of Christendom or in Church belief, but is a mischievous conceit imported from the ethnic religions into Christianity, it is difficult to explain. And it may be added here that the doctrine of our own Confession includes infants as well as believing adults in this process of immediate sanctification, they also being redeemed by Christ and regenerated at once and completely, so far as all seeds or taints of sin are concerned, by the Holy Ghost who worketh when and where and how He pleaseth, in death as in life.

What does the address teach in regard to the intermediate state of others than believers and infants? It admits that there will be some among men who by their rejection of the Gospel and by hardening themselves against it, will descend into such depths of demoniacal depravity—to use its own impressive description—that they will ultimately vanish from the sight of the redeemed forever as altogether and irredeemably evil; whether to an eternity of punishment after the final judgment, or to an eternal annihilation

at some point in the future, the address does not inform us. But we are told in one place that this descent is made in the intermediate state rather than in the present life; and in another connection that there is no doctrine of second probation, or probation after death, in the Word of God; and in still another that there is no judicial separation or division of men at death into classes on the basis of their individual character and life on earth. It is difficult to formulate an intelligible theological statement from these three propositions when brought together. If there is no particular judgment in the sense just stated, and no opportunity for those who have rejected Christ in this world to accept Him and be saved through Him in the intermediate state, what does that state become? Do the holy and the unholy dwell together there in a condition of consciousness and with intermingled experiences? Are they separated, according to character, by some occult law of affinity—the one class dwelling in Paradise, the other in some retributive Gehenna? Are any of those who dwell apart in such Gehenna ever permitted to cross the deep gulf, and join the saints in Paradise? Can this intermediate state be regarded as in any sense a state where new experiences may perchance bring new characters to those who die in unbelief? Are the real characters of men indeterminate, and their punishment as sinners postponed, during this long period prior to the resurrection? Does God leave myriads of sinners, age after age, imprisoned but uncondemned, yet without possible change in their condition? Is the function assigned to Christ as the Judge of men to be exercised only at the final day, so that He reaches no decision respecting the uncounted millions whom His eye sees in this intermediate estate, neither of probation nor of retribution? Such questions crowd upon us from many sides, but the address helps us to no real answer; the speaker is silent.

Dr. Briggs justly says, as he approaches his conclusion, that the inductive study of the Bible, such as his new chair contemplates, forces us to study every word, sentence, and clause, and to ascend in the induction from stage to stage, until the whole organism of the Bible, the sum total of its teaching on any subject, rises beautiful and precious before our sight. If he will but pursue this method, which, indeed, all considerate theologians strive to follow in their researches, he will find that the doctrine of an immediate sanctification of all believers and infants at death, with its correlate in the sanctification of no others during the intermediate life, and the kindred doctrine of a particular judgment of all men at death on the basis of character, are not vain conceits dragged into Christianity from the ethnic faiths by stupid teachers of the Church, but rather are verities as demonstrable and as incontestable as is the doctrine of eternity itself. And if he desires further confirmation of this fact, he may find it in the following words from that revered and now sainted teacher at whose feet it was once his privilege to sit: "This judgment" (the final judgment of which Dr. Smith is speaking) "is not the first passing of judgment, but the final manifestation of it. It is the end of a mediatorial kingdom—the consummation of an economy. The position that at this judgment the first passing of judgment will occur, uproots the Scriptural doctrine of sin and of the penalty of death, which has already begun to be inflicted upon men."\*

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\* H. B. Smith, *Syst. of Christ. Theol.*, p. 613. For his doctrine of sanctification, see pp. 575-579. For his clear proposition that there is no sufficient scriptural warrant for the notion of an intermediate state in which destiny is not yet decided, see pp. 604-606. For the same view, see also Shedd, *Dogm. Theol.*, ii., 616-624.

Dr. Briggs speaks with great emphasis of the privilege he has enjoyed in sitting as a learner at the feet of two men whom he reveres above all others—Henry Boynton Smith and Isaac Augustus Dorner.

## CONCLUDING SUGGESTIONS.

It is not to be expected that within the confines of one brief address Professor Briggs should furnish a complete outline of the topics with which he will be occupied in his new and most inviting department of instruction. But it may as well be confessed that the summary of opinions which he has given in this address under the three general heads named, together with what is said afterwards under the title of Biblical Ethics and of the Messiahship, is not such as to excite lively apprehensions, lest, under the de-

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One cannot well refrain from remembering that both of these men belonged to that class of persons to whom the address refers so often in such terms of contempt. The first of these men was in a marked degree philosophical, and at times speculative, but also always systematic and historical and strongly confessional, as he was highly spiritual, in his theology. The second was one of the most abstract, speculative, unconfessional, individualistic in his thinking, even among German theologians—the Schleiermacher of our time.

It is interesting to inquire from which of these two great theologians the Biblical Theology described in this address has been derived. So far as the writer, who has read the published productions of the first with care for a long time, has been able to discover, the fact is that there is hardly one of the new views here expressed for which the support of Dr. Smith can justly be quoted: his writings show that on several important points he taught exactly the opposite. On the other hand, the careful reader of the *System of Christian Doctrine*, by Dorner, will find most of them there. The German theologian not only denies the doctrine of a judicial decision at death, but openly affirms a second probation, with a probability of the ultimate restoration of all men. He also holds to a progressive sanctification of believers after death in the broadest form. His conception of man and of grace is decidedly universalistic. In common with nearly all German theologians, he makes comparatively little of that grand doctrine of the Moral Government of God, which men like Butler and Edwards taught, and which has been the ground and support of much of the best American theology of our time. Dorner is to be read carefully for his many remarkable and suggestive teachings, but is also to be read and followed with great caution.

molishing influence of this new mode of setting forth the truths of Scripture, the good old systematic but really no less biblical way will be banished at an early day from the earth. Nor does it justify the confident prediction that the incoming of this new dogmatic cultus will not only work a transformation of theology, but bring in at once the spring-time of a new age of glory, be the precursor of a reformation grander than that of Luther and Calvin, and finally bring to pass the unity of Christendom. And when at the end we are told that the theology of the creeds as it stands, is only the water-mark of a present consensus of attainment, to be swept away in the developments of the future; and that even the best of these creeds gives us only a small theology, when compared with the length and breadth, the height and depth, of the Theology of the Bible, as this is now and henceforth to be taught to men, we can only reply, in much humility, that we are willing to wait and see.

The writer cannot conclude this frank review of an address in many respects remarkable, without some expression both of interest and of regret. The high degree of intellectual vigor, of mental and moral earnestness, of intense personal conviction, of fearless loyalty to what the author regards as truth, cannot be too cordially commended. The extensive reading manifest on the topics discussed, and the diligent though not always consistent or judicious use of the material acquired, ought to be appreciated by every reader. While it is difficult sometimes to make his statements agree with one another or to harmonize them with creeds and systems to which he avows full allegiance, it is hard to imagine that the speaker does not see the agreement, or to suppose that his professions of loyalty are not genuine to the core. Much that is said awakens spontaneous sympathy and can but deepen the love for him cherished by

many, not in our Church alone, but in other denominations and in other lands. And in the presence of so many excellent qualities, small blemishes of whatever sort may easily be forgotten.

But the writer is bound, with deep regret, to say that in his judgment the address contains too much that is defective either in doctrine or in statement, too much that will not justify itself at the bar of sober judgment, too much that seems to carry in itself germinant seeds of error, too much that is more or less at variance with the teachings of a safe and free and scriptural theology, too much that appears to run counter, at least in form, to our symbols and to some of the holiest convictions of the Church. And in recording this judgment, formed in no temper of hostility and expressed only under a deep sense of duty, the writer hopes that his words may in some degree contribute to check troublous departures from the straight and clear path of progress theological and spiritual, to bring the truth on the grave themes discussed into fuller and happier light, and through the truth to confirm the belief and promote the loving unity of the Church.























































